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TAGS: [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [IS](#) [KPAL](#) [AE](#)
SUBJECT: FORMER SECRETARY POWELL AND UAE VICE PRESIDENT/DUBAI RULER
DISCUSS REGIONAL CONFLICTS AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

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General Dubai, UAE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

(1) (C) Summary: In Dubai November 29 to deliver the closing address to the Leaders in Dubai conference, former Secretary of State Colin Powell also met with UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Dubai Ruler Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum (MbR) and visited senior executives of Dubai's landmark Heathcare City project (septel). MbR told Powell he was optimistic in the long run regarding Iraq, but that the situation would likely be worse in the near future with many more people dying before stability is achieved. Voicing no particular concern about the Iranian nuclear program, he urged the US to pursue talks with Iran and strongly cautioned against military action. He also underscored that a solution to the Israel/Palestinian problem remains a key to regional reform and progress. He would "work with Israel tomorrow" if there were a settlement. Powell cautioned about Iran's intention to weaponize its nuclear program, agreed on the centrality of a settlement between the Palestinians and Israelis to regional progress, and said the situation in Iraq met his definition of a "civil war" (a line he echoed in his speech to the Leaders conference). But he underscored that the important thing isn't what you call the conflict, it's what you do about it - and the solution must be an Iraqi solution, with ongoing US support. MbR agreed a hasty US pullout would have dire consequences. End Summary.

MbR: Ever the Optimist, despite Concerns in the Region

12. (SBU) Secretary Powell was accompanied by the Ambassador and Consul General; a number of key Dubai players sat in with MbR, including his son Shekh Hamdan, General Directorate for State Security head al Qemzi, federal Minister for Cabinet Affairs (and MbR confidante) Mohammed Gergawi and EMAAR holdings head Mohammed Alabar. The meeting opened with a discussion of Dubai's headlong rush toward further development. MbR told Powell that despite the range of real challenges in the region, he remained optimistic about a better future for Dubai, the UAE and the Gulf, "otherwise, why get out of bed in the morning?" He noted that a smaller percentage of his vision for Dubai has been achieved now than when he was asked the same question three years ago - "this is because my vision for Dubai is always growing." Powell agreed on the importance of looking beyond current conflicts toward future opportunities, noting that no one could have imagined only a few years ago that the US

relations would be where they are now with China and India.

Iraq: Worse before it's Better

3.(C) Turning to Iraq, MbR said he was also optimistic that the situation would stabilize eventually for the better. But he thought the situation would worsen in the short term, and that "many may need to die" before it takes a turn for the better. He referred to the current government in Iraq disparagingly, noting it was loaded with "crooks." Powell said security was the key to development, and he regretted the decision to disband the Iraqi army, which was taken without "sufficient consultation." This had undermined the security situation - building an effective army could not happen overnight. He said key to improving the security situation would be to have a government and a military that "believed in each other." One of Iraqi PM al Maliki's key problems is that the security services in Iraq do not trust his government. Echoing themes he would use later in his address to the Leaders in Dubai conference, he said the situation in Iraq met his definition of a civil war, but that the important thing isn't what you call the conflict, it's what you do about it. The solution to Iraq's security problem must be an Iraqi solution, but the US must continue to support the Iraqis until they have the capability needed to do the job themselves. MbR agreed a hasty US pullout would have dire consequences for the region.

Iran: Talking beats Bombing

4.(C) On Iran, MbR strongly cautioned against taking military action, noting "Iran will make serious trouble in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Straits of Hormuz" and with terror in reaction. MbR indicated he was not overly concerned with Iran's

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nuclear program, as there was in his view no real way to stop it given the spread of technology. Rather, He said the USG should talk to them and persuade them to move away from their current path of confrontation. Powell said no sensible senior US leader he knew - and he knows many-is seriously considering a military strike, but that there is deep concern about Iran's intent to pursue a nuclear weapon, despite its rhetoric about seeking only civilian nuclear power. He made clear "the Iranians have given us reason to believe" they are after weapons rather than simply electrical power in their nuclear program. He said that while he personally thought Iran was "years away" from being able to make a nuclear weapon, the US remains gravely concerned about the situation and should be engaging Iran directly about it.

A Solution to the Palestinian Issue Remains Key for the Region

15. (C) MbR returned to a familiar theme, that a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians is vital to moving the broader region to economic and governmental reform, fighting terror and to normalizing Israel's place in the region. He said he would "work with Israel tomorrow" if there were a settlement, as would many others. Powell said if he were to have one wish for the region, it would be for a peaceful Palestinian state side-by-side with Israel - this would change the dynamic of the region in a positive way. (He also repeated this theme in his public presentation.) Powell agreed on the centrality of this issue to regional problems, and hoped that Secretary Rice's renewed focus on working toward a solution would gain traction.

16. (C) Comment: As noted, Powell echoed many of the points made with MbR in his address to the Leaders in Dubai conference later

in the day. Responding to a question at the conference, Powell admitted he regretted that the information about Iraqi WMD in his presentation to the UN Security Council was wrong. But in response to another question, he flatly refused to agree that the US was applying a "double standard" by not engaging the democratically-elected HAMAS government. He underscored that HAMAS can't have it both ways, i.e. be a responsible political organization while at the same time using terrorism to pursue its goals and calling for the destruction of Israel. His presentation ended on this note, and may be part of the reason it received polite, but unenthusiastic, applause. Press headlines here played up Powell's statement that he felt Iraq was in a civil war, but did not include his key point - it's not what you call the situation that's important, it's what you do about it that counts, and that his prescription on how to move forward sounded much like the approach the President continues to advocate. On Iran, ironically, Tehran special envoy Sadiq Mahsouli (in the UAE to deliver a message from Ahmadinejad to President Khalifa) was waiting in the wings to pay a courtesy call on MBR even as Powell finished his meeting. End Comment. SUTPHIN